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## Viewing cable 09MANAGUA859, NICARAGUA'S REGIONAL ELECTIONS - THE MORE THINGS

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09MANAGUA859**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09MANAGUA859</a>	<a href="#">2009-08-31 21:29</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>  
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>  
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4509  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000859

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN AND DRL  
STATE PASS TO USAID  
TREASURY FOR SENNICH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2019

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUA'S REGIONAL ELECTIONS - THE MORE THINGS  
DON'T CHANGE

REF: A. MANAGUA 554  
IB. 08 MANAGUA 1392  
IC. 08 MANAGUA 1351  
ID. 08 MANAGUA 1101  
IE. 08 MANAGUA 982  
IF. 08 MANAGUA 939  
IG. 08 MANAGUA 761  
IH. 08 MANAGUA 209

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan, reasons 1.4(b&d)

I1. (C) Summary: On July 30, Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) established the election calendar for the Atlantic coast's regional elections, which will take place March 7, 2010. The corrupt CSE magistrates who manipulated the system and were complicit in the massive fraud in the November 2008 municipal elections remain the main obstacle to ensuring free, fair, and transparent regional elections. The CSE has already fired warning shots regarding party participation, voter registration, and electoral observation.

Nicaraguan civil society and opposition groups have expressed concern that Nicaragua appears headed for another fraudulent election, with likely negative consequences for national elections in 2011. End Summary.

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CSE Issues Electoral Calendar  
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I2. (SBU) On July 30, the CSE established the election calendar for the Atlantic coast's regional elections, scheduled for March 7, 2010. These contests will determine who will fill the 48 seats of the regional councils for the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS). Among the authorities and powers vested in these councils is the ability to authorize the extraction of natural resources through the granting of concessions. The regional councils also prioritize development projects within their respective regions, although they rely on the central government for their budgets.

I3. (SBU) The CSE calendar establishes a series of dates leading up to the regional elections. Some of the more important dates are:

- Through September 12, 2009: applications accepted for

political party alliances;  
- September 18, 2009: CSE approval of political party alliances;  
- September 7 - 30, 2009: presentation of candidates;  
- November 6, 2009: official publication of candidates in national register ("La Gaceta");  
- Through December 6, 2009: verification of voter registration list;  
- December 7, 2009: last day to apply for a voter registration card/identity card;  
- By January 21, 2010: establishment of procedures and participation of observers;  
- January 21, 2010: opening of official campaign;  
- February 5, 2010: publication of final voter registration list;  
- March 3, 2010: closure of official campaign;  
- March 7, 2010: election day;  
- March 22, 2010: publication of provisional results;  
- April 1, 2010: proclamation of official results; and  
- May 4, 2010: inauguration of elected officials.

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Calendar Isn't the Problem - It's the Corrupt Officials  
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¶4. (C) CSE Chief of Staff Rodrigo Barreto told us that the Atlantic coast elections would run basically in the same way as last November's elections, but intimated the fraud which characterized them as well as the January 2009 regional elections might not be as flagrant for the sake of appearances. With the exception of two magistrates whose

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terms expire in February 2010, the CSE leadership will otherwise remain the same and this council will manage the elections as it had in 2008. The magistrates that will continue in office include CSE President Roberto Rivas, the person ultimately responsible for the administration of last November's elections. According to Barreto, in last year's elections Rivas acted as "the bridge" between Ortega and Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) caudillo Arnoldo Aleman (implicitly in facilitating the massive fraud).

¶5. (C) The CSE's actions in the past weeks support Barreto's statements that the regional elections will not be very different from last November's municipal contests. Employing the same tactics used in 2008 to limit the participation of opposition parties (ref G and H), the CSE has notified the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) of several "inconsistencies" in its internal organization. While Barreto told us it was unlikely the PLI would lose its legal registration, he did state the possibility existed that the party would "destroy itself." Likewise, as the CSE attempted to suppress voter turnout in 2008 (ref C, D, E, F), it now has closed local offices in the RAAS and requires citizens to travel to the regional capital of Bluefields to obtain voter identification cards. The RAAS's poor infrastructure (river travel is required to reach the capital from some parts of the region) combined with the high cost of travel for the local citizenry will make obtaining a voter card extremely difficult (if not impossible) for some in the local population. Finally, as in 2008 (ref C and D), FSLN officials and the CSE have stated that the country's two most respected elections observation groups (Ethics and Transparency, EyT, and the Institute for Development and Democracy, IPADE) will not be accredited to observe the regional elections.

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Comment  
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¶6. (C) The Ortega government appears unfazed by a growing chorus among Nicaraguan society to address the 2008 election fraud and provide some sort of meaningful election reform (ref A). Instead, it is pressing ahead with the Atlantic regional elections at an accelerated pace and without any

changes that would improve the transparency or fairness of the electoral process. Some civil society groups, including those involved in the electoral reform movement, have privately questioned whether it is worth it to compete in these elections, given the likelihood of fraud and manipulation. A repeat of fraud in the regional elections would send the worst possible signal ahead of the 2011 national elections and would further erode public confidence in Nicaragua's electoral process.

CALLAHAN